MEMBRANE PROBING SYSTEM

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to probe assemblies of the type commonly used for testing integrated circuits (IC) and, in particular, the present invention relates to a membrane probing assembly having contacts which scrub, in a locally controlled manner, across the respective input/output conductors of each device so as to reliably wipe clear the surface oxides that are normally found on those conductors thereby ensuring good electrical connection between the probing assembly and each device.

The trend in electronic production has been toward increasingly smaller geometries particularly in integrated circuit technology wherein a very large number of discrete circuit elements are fabricated on a single substrate or "wafer." After fabrication, this wafer is divided into a number of rectangular-shaped chips or "dice" where each die presents a rectangular or other regular arrangement of metallized contact pads through which input/output connections are made. Although each die is eventually packaged separately, for efficiency sake, testing of the circuit formed on each die is preferably performed while the dies are still joined together on the wafer. One typical procedure is to support the wafer on a flat stage or "chuck" and to move the wafer in X, Y and Z directions relative to the head of the probing assembly so that the contacts on the probing assembly move from die to die for consecutive engagement with each die. Respective signal, power and ground lines are run to the probing assembly from the test instrumentation thus enabling each circuit to be sequentially connected to the test instrumentation.

One conventional type of probing assembly used for testing integrated circuits provides contacts that are configured as needle-like tips. These tips are